

AMERICAN
PSYCHOLOGICAL
ASSOCIATION

April 30, 2014

The Honorable Dave G. Reichert
Committee on Ways and Means
United States House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Lloyd Doggett
Committee on Ways and Means
United States House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Reichert and Ranking Member Doggett:

The American Psychological Association (APA) is pleased to support the *Preventing Sex Trafficking and Improving Opportunities for Youth in Foster Care Act* (H.R. 4058). APA appreciates your efforts to provide tools to identify and track victims of child trafficking, determine appropriate services for each child, and strengthen support for all youth transitioning out of the child welfare system.

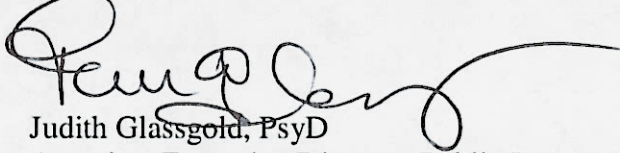
As the largest scientific and professional organization representing psychology in the United States, with 130,000 members and affiliates, APA works to advance psychology as a science, as a profession, and as a means of promoting health, education, and human welfare. APA and our members are committed to applying psychological science to promote the health and safety of children.

Human trafficking is characterized by exploitation of vulnerable populations and is a violation of the basic human right to autonomy and freedom affirmed by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (United Nations, 1948). Children in foster care are doubly vulnerable, as in many cases they have already been neglected and/or victimized, and they have fewer resources when coerced or threatened. Child welfare agencies are beginning to recognize the need to address child trafficking, yet the scope of the problem remains unclear, hindering efforts to create appropriate services.

It is imperative that trafficked youth are treated as victims, not as criminals or delinquents. Although the federal government supports a number of resources for trafficking victims under the *Trafficking Victims Protection Act* (TVPA) of 2000, there remains a dearth of information on trafficking victims, and few evidence-based preventive measures exist to keep youth transitioning out of the child welfare system from being coerced or forced into the commercial sex industry. The *Preventing Sex Trafficking and Improving Opportunities for Youth in Foster Care Act*, is a strong step forward in addressing these concerns. APA supports survivor-informed, -centered, and -led efforts in policymaking, and to that end, we offer our expertise and assistance to the Ways and Means Committee on proposals that emphasize these priorities.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit our comments. On behalf of APA's 130,000 members and affiliates, we applaud your leadership in addressing the increasing concern of domestic sex trafficking of youth in the United States. If you have any questions, please contact Amalia Corby-Edwards in our Public Interest Government Relations Office at acorby-edwards@apa.org or (202) 336-6068.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Judith Glassgold', with a long, sweeping horizontal line extending to the right.

Judith Glassgold, PsyD

Associate Executive Director, Public Interest Government Relations Office
American Psychological Association